

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 12641 260719Z

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6817

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 12641

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ET FT FR SO

SUBJECT: TFAI DELEGATION VISIT TO ADDIS ABABA

REF: (A) ADDIS 12324: (B) ADDIS 12500 AND PREVIOUS

1. ALI AREF BOURHAN, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT OF THE
FRENCH TERRITORY OF AFARS AND ISSAS (TFAI) COMPLETED HIS FIVE DAY
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 12641 260719Z

VISIT TO ETHIOPIA, OCTOBER 23. THIS WAS ONE DAY LONGER THAN ORIG-

INALLY SCHEDULED. AS PREDICTED IN PARA 2, REF A, THE VISIT WAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE. THE ETHIOPIAN POSITION SUPPORTING TFAI INDEPENDENCE AND RENOUNCING ANY TERRITORIAL CLAIMS THERE, AND ALI AREF'S CALL FOR INDEPENDENCE OF THE TERRITORY SOONER RATHER THAN LATER DOMINATED THE MEDIA. MUTUAL STATEMENTS OF FREINDSHIP WERE REPEATED DAILY. THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF ETHIOPIA AND THE TFAI BECAUSE OF THE ADDIS-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD, TRADE AND ETHNIC TIES WAS ALSO EMPHASIZED.

2. IN ADDITION TO MEETING WITH PMAC CHAIRMAN BG TEFERI BANTE AND FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO, ALI AREF MET WITH THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND ADMINISTRATION AND INTERIOR AS WELL AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE FRANCO-ETHIOPIAN RAILROAD, THE FRENCH LYCEE, ETC. IN ADDITION TO MEETING WITH OAU OFFICIALS (CF. REF B), ALI AREF MET WITH ECA EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ADEDEJI.

3. ALI AREF TOURED AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS, DAMS, ETC. OCTOBER 21-22 HE VISITED HARARGHE ADMINISTRATIVE REGION, INCLUDING INDUSTRIES IN DIRE DAWA, ALEMAYEHU AGRICULTURE COLLEGE AND HARAR MILITARY ACADEMY. DURING THIS SIDE TRIP, THE TFAI PRESIDENT MET WITH FIT. DEMISSIE TEFERA, CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OF HARARGHE, AS WELL AS WITH LEADERS OF THE AFARS AND ISSAS IN HARARGHE. THROUGHOUT HIS VISIT IN ETHIOPIA, INCLUDING HARARGHE, ALI AREF WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HAILU WOLDE GHIORGIS, AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO FRANCE.

4. FONMIN KIFLE IN BIDDING THE DELEGATION FAREWELL OCTOBER 23 SAID THE VISIT HAS BEEN USEFUL AND HE HOPED FOR FUTURE MEETINGS BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN AND ALI AREF'S ADMINISTRATIONS. HE NOTED THE TALKS WERE HELD IN A "BROTHERLY ATMOSPHERE WITH A FULL AWARENESS OF OUR HISTORY AND CULTURE." KIFLE EMPHASIZED THAT "FOR CENTURIES OUR PEOPLES HAVE LIVED IN THE HORN OF AFRICA WITHOUT THEIR CONTACTS BEING RESTRICTED BY POLITICAL BOUNDARIES." HE REEMPHASIZED THE TFAI-ETHIOPIAN COMMON DESTINY AND THEIR INTERDEPENDENCE. IN CLOSING, KIFLE STRESSED THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TFAI AND ITS LOCATION VIS-A-VIS ETHIOPIA AND URGED THAT "SIGNIFICANT RECOGNITION BE ACCORDED TO ETHIOPIA'S SECURITY INTERESTS".

5. ALTHOUGH ALI AREF HAD HAD A LONG STANDING INVITATION TO VISIT ETHIOPIA, FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCES SAY THAT A SPECIFIC INVITATION
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 12641 260719Z

WAS ISSUED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. COMMENT: HE PROBABLY HAD TO OBTAIN A FRENCH OK BEFORE HE COULD MAKE THIS TRIP. END COMMENT. ALI AREF'S VISIT HAD THREE PURPOSES (1) TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY FOR THE TFAI PRESIDENT AND "LAUNCH" HIS CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE OF THE TERRITORY. (2) TO SHORE UP RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA IN VIEW OF THE THREAT FROM SOMALIA, AND (3) TO IMPROVE SOMEWHAT HIS TARNISHED DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMAGE. FROM THE ADDIS VANTAGE POINT, GOALS ONE AND TWO WERE MORE OR LESS ACCOMPLISHED.

ALTHOUGH AFRICAN COLLEAGUES HAVE LITTLE RESPECT FOR ALI AREF, HE HAS GAINED MUCH GROUND WITH THEM AND MAY WELL GAIN RECOGNITION BY THE OAU LIBERATION COMMITTEE. IN FACT, HE STATED PUBLICLY OCT 23 THAT HE WOULD ATTEND LIBERATION COMMITTEE MEETING IN DAR ES SALAAM, THE OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING IN LUSAKA AND THE SUMMIT IN MAURITIUS. NOTWITHSTANDING ALI AREF'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH AFAR SULTAN ALI MIRAH, HE AND THE EPMG DO APPEAR PUBLICLY TO HAVE STRENGTHENED THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONS. ETHIOPIAN SUPPORT FOR THE TERRITORY'S INDEPENDENCE IS VITAL TO ALI AREF AS HE SEEKS TO BLUNT THE SOMALI POLICY OF AGGRANDIZEMENT IN THE OAU AND ARAB LEAGUE. AS IN KAMPALA, THE SOMALIS APPEARED TO HAVE SUFFERED A SET-BACK IN THEIR LONG STANDING EFFORT TO GAIN CONTROL OVER THE TFAI. IN FACT, SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE, ALI AREF CALLED UPON SOMALIA TO DROP THREE OF THE FIVE POINTS FROM THE SOMALI FIVE POINTED STAR FLAG "FOR THEY SIGNIFY THE EXPANSION POLICY OF THAT COUNTRY" (THE FIVE POINTS OF THE STAR REPRESENT THE FIVE SOMALI-INHABITED AREAS PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE: BRITISH SOMALILAND, FRENCH SOMALILAND, ITALIAN SOMALILAND, THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF KENYA AND ETHIOPIA'S OGADEN). HE LIKENED SOMALI DREAMS OF GREATER SOMALIA TO "FUTILE ATTEMPTS TO SNAP BONES OUT OF THE JAWS OF A LION." HE ADDED THAT PEOPLE OF THE TFAI ARE READY FOR INDEPENDENCE WITH THE HELP OF THE OAU.

6. SOMALI EMBASSY HERE WILL REPORTEDLY HAVE A STATEMENT ON VISIT, BUT IF SO, IT DID NOT APPEAR IN THIS MORNING'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS.

COMMENT: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW MUCH ALI AREF'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL POSITION HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY HIS ETHIOPIAN TRIP. HE HAS, HOWEVER, ENUNCIATED A NEW AND SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN TFAI (AND FRENCH) POLICY. THE EVOLUTION OF THE TFAI IS GAINING SPEED (WITH ALL THIS MAY IMPLY FOR) THE POLITICS AND STABILITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA-RED SEA REGION.
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PAGE 04 ADDIS 12641 260719Z

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